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17 September 2003

RUS41926.E

Russia: Validity of Soviet internal passports; whether such passports have stamps or inserts showing the passport's validity in Russia

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According to a January 2002 report on asylum seekers from the Russian Federation published by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Soviet internal passports "are still valid documents" (19 n.38). Indeed, a second report noted that the Republics of Bashkortostan and Tatarstan were still issuing the 1974-type, Soviet Union passports in early 2001 even though they had supplies of the new Russian Federation (RF) style internal passports (*Rossiyskaya Gazeta* 5 Jan. 2001). Based on a decree issued by former president Boris Yeltsin in 1997 (*Gazeta.ru* 18 Apr. 2001), Soviet-style passports were set to expire on 31 December 2005 (*The Moscow Times* 25 Apr. 2001; Soros Foundation 11 Aug. 1997; ITAR-TASS 22 July 1997). However, other reports noted alternate dates including 31 December 2004 (UNHCR Jan. 2002, 19n. 38) and the "end of 2003" (RFE/RL 10 Apr. 2002).

The Research Directorate found no mention of inserts or stamps in Soviet-style internal passports that designate continuing validity, although one report referred to a Ministry of Interior (MVD) decision to add an insert to the passports of residents of Bashkortostan that identifies them as Bashkirs (*The Moscow Times* 25 Apr. 2001). Russian authorities have introduced a program to gradually exchange the Soviet-style passports for the new Russian Federation versions (RFE/RL 6 Aug. 2003; *The Washington Post* 16 May 2003; *The Moscow Times* 25 Apr. 2001; *Gazeta.ru* 18 Apr. 2001; *Pravda* 13 Apr. 2001; *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* 5 Jan. 2001; ITAR-TASS 22 July 1997). Russian district (*rayon*) administrators and MVD officials reportedly "collect old passports, issue new Russian ones, take photographs, stick them to application forms, and stamp them directly on the spot" (*Rossiyskaya Gazeta* 5 Jan. 2001). A recent Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) report also refers to "mobile passport exchange bureaus" in Bashkortostan and notes that the exchange process takes "five to seven minutes" (6 Aug. 2003).

Russian internal passports have been referred to in a number of Responses, including RUS 41962.e of 13 September 2003, RUS41401.E of 24 March 2003 and RUS21431.E of 25 July 1995 on *propiska*, and RUS38772.E of 20 September 2002 on fraudulent documents. RUS28715.E of 20 November 1997 noted that Russia introduced new internal passports on 1 October 1997 following the 13 March 1997 Presidential Edict No. 232 "On the Basic Document Identifying a Citizen of the Russian Federation on the Territory of the Russian Federation" (*Rossiyskaya Gazeta* 18 Mar. 1997).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Gazeta.ru [Moscow, in Russian]. 18 April 2001. Sergei Syrov. "On Paper Most Russians are Still Soviet Citizens." (Johnson's Russia List No. 5211 19 Apr. 2001) <<http://www.cdi.org/Russia/Johnson/5211.html>> [Accessed 12 Sept. 2003]

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The Washington Post. 16 May 2003. "Russian Court Backs Muslim Scarves in IDs." (Rusnet.NL) <<http://www.rusnet.nl/news/2003/05/16/print/currentaffairs02.shtml>> [Accessed 12 Sept. 2003]

Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sites, including:

ACCORD/UNHCR, 8th European Country of Origin Information Seminar

Travel Documents

Visa Reciprocity and Country Document Finder

Access Democracy

Asylum Law

Central Electoral Commission, Russian Federation

Council of Europe

European Country of Origin Information Network

European Union

IDP Project

Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND)

Johnson's Russia List

Nelegal.net

Open Society Institute

Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

Prevent Genocide International, Global Survey of Group Classification on National ID Cards

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL)

World News Connection

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